

Drive

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Winter, and I've never loved the world more than from the passenger seat of your parents' car. Those late evening talks, our voices muffled by the soft fabric of your seats, are the closest I've ever been to merging souls. The sky would sink from day into that deep blue. There's a word for this – did you know? *L'heure bleue*. I stumbled upon it in a book one day.

But that day was far from my mind as you leaned in close. The seats shifted, and all I could see of you was the glow of your face, lit up by the dashboard. Our voices, soft and low, wrapped around us like a cocoon. We talk about us like it's a future, and there's a flutter in my stomach.

Autumn, and I have to give up on you. Back, and forth, my tides were always ebbing when yours were flowing. Your sun setting when mine was rising. In the movies, the best friends always end up together. I suppose in real life, with two girls, it's not quite the same. It's just another sapphic cliché. Oops. I caught feelings for my best friend. You told me you were moving on, and I wished to be anywhere other than the passenger seat of your parents' car. What choice did I have but to move on too?

Ever since we were 16, I'd entertained the idea of a window – an opening that required us to only step through, together. That day I shut the window. That day I left you with a sinking feeling.

That day, I put on a smile and asked about the girls you'd messaged on dating apps. That night, I signed up myself. If I swipe right on you as a joke, can't you just do the same?

Summer, and we're parked beside Collaroy Beach. This time, your parents' car had sand stamped into the carpet, and when I tried to redo my bun, I felt the gritty saltiness of my still damp hair. Do you remember Year 10 Geography, how we joked about driving up here? Did that dream ever include pounding hearts and shaky confessions, the kind of conversations you practice in your head in the shower for months? I wish that dream could've woken. In a period of threshold consciousness, you texted me that night, telling me you wish something had happened that day.

So did I.

Spring, and you're picking me up from work again. I have Dorothy's red shoes printed on my shirt, and there really is no place like home. You pull a picnic blanket out of the boot of your parents' car, and we sip water out of wine glass and eat chips and Tim Tams. Later, when I describe this moment to my Year

7s in the abstract as an example of how setting establishes tone, they'll joke about how it's a loooooove story. And it is.

When it starts to rain, we realise we're protected under our tree. Then it hits me; this is the place where the rain stops, the marker of skyline I've been chasing since childhood.

You kiss me on the threshold of precipitation. We made the mistake of going the long way round, but we find our way together in the place where the sun meets the rain, the cocoon opening up for two butterflies.